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Distributed via the DPHHS Health Alert Network (HAN) System

Thursday, September 21, 2006 1150 hours (11:50 PM MST)

No Action Required

HAN informational

This is for your information. You do not need to forward on.

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and the Interior are issuing a news release today announcing the detection of the H5 and N1 avian influenza subtypes in samples from wild pintail ducks taken Sept. 15th at the Benton Lake National Wildlife Reserve in Cascade County.

Clinical signs in the ducks and initial test results indicate the **presence of low pathogenic avian influenza (LPAI) virus, which poses no threat to human health**. Initial tests confirm that the samples **do not contain the highly pathogenic H5N1**.

Montana DPHHS is providing the following talking points as guidance, in the event you are asked to respond by the public and/or news media.

Talking points

Low-path H5N1 in wild Montana birds

September 21, 2006

Contact: Montana Dept. of Public Health & Human Services, 406-444-2596

- The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and the Interior have identified low-pathogenic H5 and N1 avian influenza virus subtypes in wild pintail ducks at Benton Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Cascade County. Additional tests are being conducted to determine whether the H5 and N1 “markers” are part of the same virus or in different viruses affecting the same bird.
- Initial tests confirm that these samples do not contain the highly pathogenic H5N1 strain that has killed millions of birds and 144 humans in Asia, Europe, and Africa.
- The strain found in the pintail ducks **does not pose a risk to the health of Montana residents**.

- There are more than 140 subtypes or strains of avian influenza that can show up in birds. These strains are common in the U.S. and around the world.
- Low pathogenic or "low path" avian influenza occurs naturally in wild birds. It can spread to domestic birds, but **it poses no threat to human health.**
- Pathogenicity is the ability of a virus to produce disease. In most cases, low-path avian influenza causes no signs of infection or only minor symptoms in birds. It does not kill birds.
- There is no known health risk to hunters or hunting dogs from contact with low-path forms of avian influenza. Nonetheless, hunters are always encouraged to use common-sense sanitation practices, such as hand washing and thorough cooking, when handling or preparing wildlife of any kind.
- The fact that officials have identified low-path H5N1 in wild birds in Montana demonstrates the effectiveness of state, federal, and local efforts to monitor bird populations for influenza viruses, including types that could potentially be transmitted to humans.
- For more information, visit www.pandemicflu.mt.gov.

No Action Required

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The goal of Montana's Health Alert Network is to transmit information to local public health authorities as quickly as possible, and assign a suitable priority to the message that is sensitive to the impact of a health-related event providing information of immediate utility relative to the public health and safety of Montanans. For questions or comments relative to Montana's HAN system you may contact the Montana State HAN Coordinator Gerry Wheat at <mailto:gwheat@mt.gov>

Categories of Health Alert messages:

- Health Alert:** conveys the highest level of importance; warrants immediate action or attention.
- Health Advisory:** provides important information for a specific incident or situation; may not require immediate action.
- Health Update:** provides updated information regarding an incident or situation; unlikely to require immediate action.
- Info Service Message:** provides general information regarding a situation or opportunity; does not typically require immediate action.

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